

Diabetes hits top ranks

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KUALA LUMPUR: Holding high positions in the public and private sectors comes with a price — diabetes.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2006 revealed that the national prevalence of diabetes among senior officers and managers was 15.9 per cent, the second highest after the unemployed (16.1 per cent).

Housewives ranked third with 14.2 per cent followed by those under the technical and associates category (12.1 per cent), machine operators and assemblers (11.7 per cent), services and shop workers (10.7 per cent) and professionals (10 per cent).

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Khalid Abdul Kadir said there was a "diabetic explosion" in Malaysia and wondered whether enough was being done to stop it.

He said an example could be seen among the Malays in Tanjung Karang, Selangor.

The prevalence was four per cent in 1984 and 6.5 per cent in 1990. Two years ago, it shot up to 20 per cent.

In Malaysia, the prevalence of the disease was one to two per cent in 1960, 6.3 per cent in 1985, 8.3 per cent in 1996 and 14.9 per cent in 2006. In just 20 years, it has increased to 250 per cent.

Dr Khalid said one in seven adults



Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Khalid Abdul Kadir warns that more Malaysians will get diabetes

in Malaysia was a diabetic.

The NHMS 2006 revealed that 14.9 per cent of Malaysians were diabetic, 42.6 per cent were hypertensive, 29.1 per cent were overweight and 14.4 per cent were obese.

"The worrying trend is that more people below the age of 45 are getting diabetes," said Dr Khalid, who is also a professor of medicine at Monash University.

He said with modernisation and economic progress, there would be an explosion of "metabolic catastrophe" in Asia, including Malaysia, due to obesity, hypertension and diabetes.

In 1990, he said the prevalence of

NATIONAL PREVALENCE OF DIABETES

Job category	Prevalence (%)
Senior officials and managers	15.9
Professionals	10
Technical and associates	12.1
Clerical workers	8.7
Services and shop workers	10.7
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	2.7
Crafts and related trade workers	6.4
Machine operators and assemblers	11.7
Elementary occupation	9
Housewives	14.2
Unemployed	16.1
Unclassified	6.7

obesity and diabetes among the Orang Asli, the hunter-gatherers in the jungle fringes of Pahang or in settlements at Carey Islands and Ulu Langat outside Kuala Lumpur was zero. But over the years, the Institute for Medical Research found that five per cent of the resettled Orang Asli had diabetes.

Dr Khalid attributed the growing number of diabetic cases to the lack of physical activity and excess calories accumulation as one ages.

"As the population ages, we are going to see more people with diabetes," he said, adding that diabetes, hypertension and obesity seldom killed a person but they contributed to heart diseases.

He said the problem could only be overcome through lifestyle modifications, such as weight loss, regular physical activity and dietary changes. He added that the time had come to create awareness of the disease among Malaysians.

